

Adaptive Reuse at Park Place, Irvine

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On May 2nd, 2013, the ULI Orange County/Inland Empire Places of Commerce Initiative Council members and members of the ULI toured the Park Place campus in Irvine with Eric Brown of LBA Realty. The tour of Park Place concluded a series of meetings and tours the Council organized in FY13 that explored “Scales of Commerce.” This tour provided a fascinating opportunity for the attendees to discover how the success of this world-class mixed-use development was the result of creatively reimagining, redeveloping, and renewing an existing development.

Perhaps the most captivating story told during the tour was the properties’ transaction history. In 1973, the property was acquired for less than three million dollars. Twelve years later, the property was purchased with a price tag that topped four hundred million dollars. In 2009, LBA Realty began to assemble a portfolio that included the existing developments on the 105-acre site and immediately began reimagining Park Place. While vacancies loomed and competing commercial space provided high-tech facilities, LBA Realty believed there was an adaptive re-use opportunity for every space on the Park Place campus. The goal was to create a world-class mixed-use office campus that provided a synergy among uses, quality space, on-site amenities, and places for people to relax.

As of 2013, and four years into LBA Realty’s adaptive re-use project, the campus continues to receive architectural upgrades, parking and access improvements, technology advancements, state-of-the-art residential development, and commercial lease agreements. The redevelopment of Park Place has created an environment that is attracting large corporate headquarters, renewed lease agreements with large tenants, and investment from developers looking to add premier residential communities and commercial properties. Along with the 990 residential units currently being developed by the Irvine Company, the construction of 150-170 hotel rooms is expected to commence in the near future.

While Park Place is Orange County’s signature address for many of the country’s top corporations, the campus is quickly becoming one of the top retail centers in the county. The retail center provides tenants direct access to a numerous cafes, saloons, an organic market, and premier dining options like Houston’s Restaurant and Ruth’s Chris Steak House. With the completion of the residential apartments (expected, 2014) along the southern boundary of the campus, the development will become a benchmark for full-service mixed-use projects.

At the conclusion of this tour, the Places of Commerce Council members have successfully introduced the latest trends and innovations in mixed-use, retail, office, and industrial space. As the council reflects on the various “Scales of Commerce” that were observed and discussed this year, it is evident that a generic approach to commercial development is no longer economically sustainable. Each community, region, and/or campus requires unique strategies for imagining space, redeveloping an existing site, or renewing an outdated approach. Whether or not these strategies constitute a paradigm shift in development patterns, the Places of Commerce Council undoubtedly witnessed the great success of developments and corridors that are paying close attention to shifting trends and demands of today’s residents, tenants, and consumers.